



Chair Report GAM AGM October 2026

It has been a somewhat mixed year with some very positive news on the driving front, great support from the charity trustees and the GAM management committee, but still some challenges in finding additional resources and support to ensure we can continue the good work. On the negative side we seem to have an increase with the amount of chivying and chasing we need to do with IAM RS HQ to deal with various membership and other organisational matters. Fortunately, Paul Whitehead has sufficient energy to keep on the case.

We have also been surprised that a small but significant number of our new associates either never get started with their coaching or drop out very quickly. We suspect this may be because the course is purchased for them as a gift, they find that it was not what they expected, or other commitments take a priority. We try to understand from the individuals why this is, but it is very difficult to develop a clear simple picture.

The drop-out rate triggered some personal questions and thoughts. Is advanced driving a necessary and valuable benefit to society in the context of 'Road Safety'? There is no doubt that those who take the course, go through to conclusion and pass really want to do it. Most we see are basically safe drivers who want to polish their skills. I suspect it is highly likely that those who really need to do it (a) don't know they would benefit from coaching and (b) won't pay and volunteer to do it.

I feel the real need for driving improvement is at a lower level for those who are young and inexperienced, have lost confidence, or need some remedial help. IAM RS don't have a product to offer at a basic level that could be delivered by GAM Observers. I do think that IAM RS could offer a basic course that addresses the fundamentals of observation, anticipation, and planning, but doesn't go into the more subtle and esoteric aspects of limit point of vision, brake gear overlap, pull push steering, etc. If a basic course recipient got the taste for the full course they would be encouraged to go to the next stage.

I'm delighted that Ripley Village Hall has continued to be a venue liked by most. Occasionally the car park can be rather busy on a Sunday, but we always have access to the separate room we've booked. The location is also quite convenient, when the roads aren't being dug up, for taking associates out for a mixed diet of A3 dual carriageway, A and B roads. Sadly, the availability of single carriageway roads with national speed limits seem to diminish month by month. If we add to this the evolving mandatory Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), it seems that the opportunities to develop our open road skills are diminishing. However, we still see a strong ongoing demand for advanced driving courses, and the feedback from most associates is that it's a very rewarding process with a very positive outcome.

My colleagues will report the test results in detail. I would highlight that we have been very successful with F1RST class passes over the last year and have had relatively very few failures. Passing is the key measure of our coaching success and for this I thank our dedicated team of observers, led by

David Clifton, for their continued dedication to the cause. The observers are really the backbone of Guildford Advanced Motorists. David has organized well supported training sessions, and has introduced peer to peer observing to help us develop a more consistent coaching quality.

On the committee front the team have continued in post, and as Chair I have been very grateful for that support, help and encouragement. I need to make you aware, if you don't already know, that our treasurer of some 10 years, Michael Tilney, has informed us that he wishes to retire from the treasurer role. Apart from the annual accounts his work is largely unseen by the members, but is essential to support our charity responsibilities and to make sure that the finances are under control. He has provided consistent timely reports for all our committee meetings enabling the team to keep their finger on the pulse and ensure that we remain solvent and have necessary reserves for any unseen events. I thank Michael very much on behalf of the committee and the members for his unstinting work for the group, I wish Michael and his family all the best for the future.

I therefore need to appeal once again for somebody to come forward to fill Michael's shoes. The GAM Accounts are relatively simple, based on spreadsheet accounting of receipts and expenditure. There is no need for a treasurer of our group to be a qualified accountant able to deal with asset depreciation, accruals or other more complex processes. Please give me a call if you feel able to help and we can share the tasks that need to be undertaken and the amount of effort that will be required. With Michael's help, we will offer support for on-boarding a new treasurer.

My main disappointment is that membership does not carry through strongly from associate membership undertaking the advanced driving course into ongoing full membership. A significant majority of associates, having passed the test, never renew their IAM RS or GAM membership at the first time of asking. We have discussed the reasons for this. Part of the problem is at GAM level where it has proved very difficult for us to find and provide ongoing interest for members. At IAM RS level members see limited value in continuing membership particularly in challenging financial times. Whilst we don't have a detailed analysis, informal discussions suggest that very few members see advantage in member benefits. The most obvious potential benefit would be cheaper access to motor insurance. This seems very hard to come by through IAM RS's broker.

I'm delighted that we have welcomed some new blood to the GAM Team, some new observers which David will update us about. Paul Woods has taken on the role of 'allocated observer run' coordinator (AOR), and this has provided additional coaching opportunities in a more organized way. We have found a small but important number of our associates aren't able to attend the monthly Sunday runs or prefer the one-to-one observer associate relationship through AOR.

Recently this has reawoken a discussion about the best way of delivering our coaching. Is it best to have one consistent observer, with a cross-check later in the run series with another observer, or is it better to have a mix of observers from month-to-month. There is a strong opinion from most of the AOR observers that they prefer their style as it is easier to track associate progress from one run to another. It is also easier to finesse and improve the frequency of runs by doing one or two runs a month.

Now some news from HQ. Our prime contact with HQ changed again during the year. We welcomed

Tony Green last year, and now he has moved on and has been replaced by Rob Embleton as our “Area Service Delivery Manager” (ASDM). We are working hard to develop the necessary relationship with Rob.

We attended the 2025 Regional forum meeting in Leatherhead and will have a presence at the 2026 event in the autumn.

Thanks for your continued support and interest in our mission.

Gordon Farquharson, GAM Chair, October 2026.